

# Inspection of St Thomas' Church of England Primary School

Huddersfield Road, Newhey, Rochdale, Lancashire OL16 3QZ

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Inspection dates: 10 and 11 October 2023

<b>Overall effectiveness</b>	<b>Good</b>
The quality of education	<b>Good</b>
Behaviour and attitudes	<b>Good</b>
Personal development	<b>Good</b>
Leadership and management	<b>Good</b>
Early years provision	<b>Requires improvement</b>
Previous inspection grade	Good

## **What is it like to attend this school?**

Pupils beam with pride when talking about their caring and friendly school. They benefit from the respectful relationships that they enjoy with supportive staff and with each other. Staff speak kindly and courteously to pupils. In turn, pupils feel assured that they will be listened to if they have any concerns. This makes them feel happy and safe.

The school expects pupils to achieve well. For the majority, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND), these expectations are realised. However, in the early years, some children are not ready for the next stage of their learning. This is because the early years curriculum does not sufficiently help them gain the knowledge and skills that they need.

Pupils benefit from learning beyond the academic curriculum. They particularly enjoy the range of sporting clubs on offer after school. They are very proud of their achievements in competitive sports tournaments. Many pupils learn to play an instrument. The school choir regularly sings at community events.

Pupils are articulate. The school ensures that the pupils' voice is heard through surveys and representation via the school council. In the past, pupils have successfully voted for a therapy dog to visit the school. Pupils care about their school environment. They are currently raising money for litter picker equipment.

## **What does the school do well and what does it need to do better?**

The school has designed an ambitious and broad curriculum from Year 1 to Year 6. This curriculum meets the needs and interests of all pupils, including those with SEND.

The school has identified the important knowledge that it wants pupils to learn in Years 1 to 6. It has also carefully considered how pupils will build a rich body of knowledge over time by logically ordering subject content.

In the main, staff choose appropriate activities to enable pupils to learn from the curriculum. However, at times, some teachers do not present subject matter effectively enough to ensure that pupils understand new concepts. This means that a small number of pupils develop misconceptions in their subject knowledge.

The curriculum in the early years is still in the development phase. Recent changes have not had the desired impact at this point in time. This means that adults in the early years do not have sufficient guidance on what knowledge should be taught and when this should happen. As a result, children complete tasks and activities which do not help them to learn all that they should know in readiness for Year 1. At times, their learning is disconnected and, in some instances, superficial.

The school carries out checks on pupils' learning. In most subjects, this information is used well to make any necessary adjustments to the curriculum. This helps pupils learn more effectively over time. However, this is not true in a small number of subjects.

Pupils with SEND are identified quickly and supported well in lessons. Where appropriate, pupils with specific learning needs receive additional support to help them access the curriculum.

The school places a high priority on ensuring that children in the early years and pupils in key stage 1 learn to read. From the very beginning, children in the Reception Year learn to say and write letter sounds. The school makes sure that pupils read books that contain only the sounds that they know. This helps them to read with increasing fluency and confidence. Any pupils who are not keeping up with the intended pace of the phonics programme are given the support that they need to catch up quickly.

As pupils move into key stage 2, they continue to read books which are well matched to their reading stage. They also enjoy reading a wide variety of book types from a range of different authors. Older pupils love sharing a book with their reading buddies. Pupils are particularly enthused by the exciting and engaging way that staff read to them. Across the school, pupils develop a real love of reading.

Pupils are enthusiastic learners. They attend school regularly. Pupils support each other in lessons and cooperate well. Children in the early years learn to take turns and listen to each other. Older pupils act as role models for others in their responsibilities as head boy and head girl.

Pupils are accepting and tolerant of those who are different to themselves. The school promotes this through learning opportunities such as the school's therapeutic outdoor sessions and by recognising autism awareness week. Pupils also visit a school in a contrasting area to meet pupils with backgrounds different to their own.

The school has made sure that pupils are well prepared for life in modern Britain. It has made deliberate decisions about what pupils will learn through the personal, social, health and economic education programme. This includes learning about physical and mental health and online safety.

Several governors, including the chair of governors, are new to the role. Nonetheless, they have supported the school effectively through a considerable period of change. Governors are aware of important developments in school and know its community well. Staff were overwhelmingly positive about being part of the school community. They appreciate their voice being heard. They said that leaders listen to their views when discussing new initiatives and take into consideration any impact on their workload.

Parents and carers also spoke extremely positively about the school. They said that they appreciate the academic support and the care given to their children. Parents

can come into school at regular intervals throughout the year to work with their children in class. This, alongside several workshop sessions to learn how the school teaches reading, enables parents to support their children academically at home.

## Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

## What does the school need to do to improve?

### (Information for the school and appropriate authority)

- In many areas, the early years curriculum is not coherently organised. The key knowledge has not been sufficiently identified. As a result, children do not learn all that they should to be ready for the next stage of their education. The school should ensure that the early years curriculum is clearly organised to identify the knowledge that children will learn, to help them be ready for Year 1.
- In a small number of subjects, staff do not present subject matter effectively. This means that some pupils carry misconceptions in their learning. The school should ensure that staff develop the necessary subject-specific expertise so that pupils are learning what the school intends.
- The school does not use the information from teachers' assessments well enough to reshape the curriculum in a small number of subjects. At times, this hinders pupils from building their knowledge as well as they could. The school should ensure that it uses the information from checks on learning to adapt and refine the curriculum so that pupils know and remember more.

## How can I feed back my views?

You can use [Ofsted Parent View](#) to give Ofsted your opinion on your child's school, or to find out what other parents and carers think. We use information from Ofsted Parent View when deciding which schools to inspect, when to inspect them and as part of their inspection.

The Department for Education has further [guidance](#) on how to complain about a school.

## Further information

You can search for [published performance information](#) about the school.

In the report, 'disadvantaged pupils' is used to mean pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND); pupils who meet the [definition of children in need of help and protection](#); pupils receiving statutory local authority support from a social worker; and pupils who otherwise meet the criteria used for deciding the school's [pupil premium funding](#) (this includes pupils claiming free school meals at any

point in the last six years, looked after children (children in local authority care) and/or children who left care through adoption or another formal route).

## School details

<b>Unique reference number</b>	105824
<b>Local authority</b>	Rochdale
<b>Inspection number</b>	10294235
<b>Type of school</b>	Primary
<b>School category</b>	Voluntary aided
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	5 to 11
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number of pupils on the school roll</b>	137
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair of governing body</b>	Stephanie Monteiro
<b>Headteacher</b>	Rebecca Williams
<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.stthomasce.rochdale.sch.uk">www.stthomasce.rochdale.sch.uk</a>
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	9 October 2018, under section 8 of the Education Act 2005

## Information about this school

- The chair of the governing body has recently been appointed.
- In the last academic year, the school has undertaken a considerable staffing restructure.
- The school uses one unregistered alternative provider.
- The school is a voluntary aided Church of England school. The most recent section 48 inspection took place in May 2017 under the Diocese of Manchester. The next section 48 inspection is due to take place before the end of the 2025 academic year.

## Information about this inspection

The inspectors carried out this graded inspection under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

- Inspections are a point in time judgement about the quality of a school's education process.

- This was the first routine inspection the school received since the COVID-19 pandemic began. Inspectors discussed the impact of the pandemic with the school and have taken that into account in their evaluation of the school.
- Inspectors met with the headteacher and assistant headteacher, as well as other subject leaders in school. The lead inspector also spoke with a representative from the local authority and a representative from the Diocese of Manchester.
- Inspectors carried out deep dives in the following subjects: early reading, mathematics and music. For each deep dive, this involved holding discussions about the curriculum, reviewing curriculum documentation, visiting a sample of lessons, speaking to pupils about their learning and looking at samples of pupils' work.
- The lead inspector observed some pupils from Year 1 to Year 3 reading to a familiar member of staff.
- Inspectors also discussed the curriculum in some other subjects. They looked at curriculum documentation and the work completed by pupils. Inspectors also spoke to some pupils about their learning.
- Inspectors took account of the responses from the Ofsted surveys for pupils and staff. An inspector spoke to parents as they dropped off their children at school. Inspectors also considered the responses from Ofsted Parent View, including the free-text comments.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of safeguarding, the inspectors reviewed the single central record; took account of the views of leaders, staff and pupils; and considered the extent to which the school has created an open and positive culture around safeguarding that puts pupils' interest first.

## **Inspection team**

Sheena Clark, lead inspector

His Majesty's Inspector

Peter Berry

Ofsted Inspector

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